FAIRBANKS

Arctic Expedition Finds New Species

A group of University of Alaska Fairbanks scientists, researchers and technicians made the most of their summer on a trip across a swath of Arctic Ocean that resulted in the discovery of seven previously unknown species.

Traveling aboard the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker *Healy* as part of a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration expedition, 35 researchers traveled to carefully chosen points on the ice pack over the Canadian Basin, where modern technology allowed them to view deep Arctic life in its natural state.

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

This *cydippid ctenophore* or comb jelly was one of the many species observed by UAF scientists in the deep waters of the Arctic Ocean this summer.

The result: a once-in-a-lifetime experience for most, and the discovery of four new types of jellyfish and three kinds of worms.

"It's just amazing when you see something you haven't seen before," UAF professor Rolf Gradinger told the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner.*

The scientists used an array of tools to explore depths of more than 10,000 feet, where cold and darkness are the norm but life is plentiful, they told the newspaper. Along with a remote-operated vehicle with special capturing devices, the scientists used divers, high-definition television cameras, plankton nets and a box claw to explore the depths below the ice pack.

Gradinger told the *News-Miner* they found deep-water shrimp, sea anemones, sea cucumbers, pelagic snails and countless other creatures too exotic to describe.

"We had an idea of what we could expect . . . but what really surprised us was the number of species," he said.

ROUND ISLAND

Walrus Cams Open Window to an Isolated Bering Sea Habitat

Now showing at a computer near you: more walruses than you can shake a flipper at, thanks to an interagency project that has linked a live video feed from the Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary in the Bering Sea to an Internet website.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game installed two cameras earlier this year at the sanctuary on Round Island, giving biologists and Web surfers a chance to view the huge animals in their natural surroundings. The cameras, spaced a quarter of a mile apart above the shoreline, survey the rocky beach below where the 2-ton mammals jostle, play or just lay around.

Joe Meehan, a Fish and Game refuges coordinator, told the *Juneau Empire* the cameras are a vital research tool for scientists tracking walrus populations in the Bering Sea. Meehan said the cameras are particularly helpful when biologists are counting the mammals. In 2000, some 8,500 were counted; as of July of this year, that total was down to 2,300.

According to the newspaper, the $40,000 project is a joint effort by Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Pacific Walrus Conservation Fund, the National Park Service and the Alaska SeaLife Center, which has handled much of the technical work and hosts the video feed at www.alaskasealife.org/New/research/roundisland.php

DIANE CALAMARA OKONEK

New cameras installed at the Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary in the Bering Sea are beaming back real-time video of the mammals via the Internet.